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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes accomplishments of state assistive technology (AT) projects for people with disabilities during 1999-2001. An introductory section reviews the growth and scope of assistive technology projects. This section is followed by one on the effect of state AT projects on the lives of individuals with disabilities and the increasing need for assistive technology. The following two sections provide an overview of capacity building and a discussion of the future needs for AT for individuals with disabilities. Specific accomplishments of state AT projects are then briefly summarized. These summaries are organized under the following categories: (1) employment; (2) community living; (3) telecommunications and information technology; (4) education; and (5) health care. Summaries include the project name, the state, and a brief description of project accomplishments. The paper concludes that state AT projects have created a broad base of programs and enjoy widespread support among many constituencies for their successful, ongoing work. Attached is a list of 56 state Assistive Technology Act grantees with full contact information. (DB)

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Accomplishments of State Assistive Technology Projects, 1999-2001: Providing Assistive Technology for Employment, Community Living, Telecommunications, Education, and Health Care

By
Association for the Advancement of Rehabilitation (RESNA)

2001

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF STATE
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS, 1999-2001:

Providing Assistive Technology for Employment, Community Living, Telecommunications, Education, and Health Care

RESNA

Technical Assistance Project

Providing Technical Assistance and Information to the Projects Funded Under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-394)

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Providing Assistive Technology for Employment, Community Living, Telecommunications, Education, and Health Care

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RESNA is an interdisciplinary association of people with a common interest in technology and disability. RESNA is the grantee funded under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 to provide technical assistance and information to the State Assistive Technology projects.

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The Growth and Scope of Assistive Technology Programs

If you are one of more than 50 million individuals with a disability in the United States, how do you access the communications devices, adaptive computers, equipment loan programs, and other assistive technology services and devices that you may need at home or work, in school, and in the community?

During the past 11 years, many persons with disabilities have turned to State Assistive Technology Projects for assistive technology[1] (AT) equipment and services. In 1989, Congress began funding for the first State AT Projects through the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-407). Ten years later, Congress renewed its commitment to persons with disabilities through the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (AT Act—P.L.105-394).

All 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have an AT Act Project funded under the AT Act of 1998. AT Projects in the United States and its territories offer a diverse and comprehensive agenda of AT and information technology (IT) programs. These include information and referral services, funding assistance and cash loans for devices, assessment for appropriate AT, equipment demonstration and try-out, equipment loan, and refurbished AT equipment. (In subsequent sections of this report, for brevity reasons, the term "State AT Projects" will be used to indicate AT Projects in both states and territories.)

A Mandate for Change

Over the past 11 years, as persons with disabilities have made known their AT and IT needs, State AT Projects have responded by establishing and implementing AT activities and by continually expanding the scope of their services and the breadth of their mission. Through a federal mandate, AT Projects are engaged in implementing capacity building and advocacy activities to further the provision of AT services and equipment to persons with disabilities. According to the AT Act of 1998, these capacity building and advocacy activities include:

> the development and implementation of laws, regulations, policies, practices, procedures, or organizational structures that promote access to assistive technology devices and assistive technology services for individuals with disabilities in education, health care, employment, and community living contexts, and in other contexts such as the use of telecommunications.

State AT Projects continue to engage in many successful capacity building activities. An example of a capacity building activity, which is being accomplished through policy and legislative work advanced by State AT Projects, is making the AT purchasing policies of state agencies more efficient. To achieve this goal, many State AT Projects have designed new procedures to assist individuals in rehabilitation who need to receive AT devices in a timely manner.

Another example of an important capacity building activity, undertaken by State AT Projects in recent years, has been the ongoing achievement of a change in "practice" to benefit infants and toddlers. State AT Projects continue to ensure that AT is included in a state's early intervention services for children with disabilities. Additionally, some State AT Projects have worked to pass state legislation that mandates screening for possible hearing problems in newborns, and provision of necessary follow-up services. The early identification of hearing problems will allow services and AT to be provided at a very early age, to help ensure a child's normal development.

State AT Projects currently are working on many other capacity building activities. One effort recently started by a State AT Project has created a collaboration with three AT providers to make AT much more affordable for individuals, and thus enhance employment and educational opportunities and the quality of life for those with disabilities. Through this buying partnership, individuals with disabilities now can purchase AT at prices that are 50 to 100 percent below those of other AT dealers. In another important capacity building

[1] The term "assistive technology device" means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. The term "assistive technology service" means any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.

and advocacy effort, many State AT Projects are working with other groups in their states to educate their state legislatures as to the need for laws that will allow working people with disabilities to buy Medicaid insurance to cover their health care needs, including necessary AT.

Impact of State AT Projects on the Lives of Individuals with Disabilities and the Increasing Need for Assistive Technology

Individual State AT Projects focus their activities and programs on the needs and barriers identified by citizens with disabilities in their states. State AT Projects have found that their resources are being stretched as they reach out to more people who need AT services and equipment to open up employment opportunities, to improve their quality of life, and to advance their educational opportunities. And more individuals will need AT in the future because as a population ages, more individuals typically will experience some functional limitations. Research shows that most disabilities occur to those who are over 40 years of age. As the "Baby Boom" and later generations move into their middle age years and beyond, more disabilities can be expected to occur, with a greater need for AT services from states.

National data have shown an increase in the need for AT, particularly in recent years. Analysis of data from the 1997 National Health Interview Survey, Sample of Adult Persons Section (whose sample represented an estimated 195.3 million non-institutionalized adults) showed that of the estimated 68.4 million non-institutionalized persons with a disability of any type, 8.7 million (or 12.7 percent) had a health problem which required some type of AT.[2] In 1998, this number had increased to 9.2 million or 14.7 percent. It appears that the need for AT will continue to grow as the percentage of persons who experience functional limitations and require AT continues its upward trend.

State AT Projects have established many successful AT programs and services during the past 11 years to assist the increasing numbers of individuals who require AT. These programs and services include regional centers for information, referral, and assistance in acquiring AT; financial loan programs; the development of state lemon laws to protect consumers; AT equipment recycling programs, equipment loan programs, and equipment demonstration centers; AT assessment centers; workshops and training events; conferences; publications; and outreach programs.

To ensure that persons with disabilities do not lose ground in the future, these programs must be well maintained and expanded. For example, while many State AT Programs are trying to maintain the AT outreach and education programs currently in place, they also are trying to focus greater amounts of resources on reaching more diverse minority populations and rural populations. At the same time that AT Projects are maintaining and expanding these current programs in many different areas, they also must be looking to the future and developing new AT and IT programs and options for individuals with disabilities.

Report Provides Overall Picture of State AT Programs' Impact

The central purpose of this report is to document the progress of State AT Projects, whose work will be discussed in a subsequent section on accomplishments. By presenting a collection of individual "snapshot" portraits of AT activities in each state, this section will paint an overall picture of the exceptional work provided by State AT Projects for persons with disabilities. Although each State AT Project operates numerous programs and activities, the space constraints inherent in this report allow only one or two AT initiatives from each state to be discussed. However, one state's initiative is representative of similar work being undertaken in many other states. Thus, one state's program that is described in this document will provide the reader with an overview of the similar types of AT programs that are operational in many other states.

For instance, although only a few states receive mention under the "Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility" heading in the "Telecommunications/Information Technology" portion of the accomplishments section, virtually every State AT Project is operating an extensive,

[2] Carlson, D. (2001, June). *Assistive Technology Use and Need: A National Survey of Persons with Disabilities.* Paper presented at the meeting of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, Reno, NV.

statewide program to promote and ensure Web accessibility to state "eGovernment" for individuals with disabilities. Thus, an individual state's initiative described in this document can be viewed as representing only the very "tip of the iceberg" of the comprehensive AT services provided by each State AT Project. Readers who want a complete listing of all AT activities and programs operated by an individual State AT Project should contact the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA) Technical Assistance Project or the individual State AT Project for more information.

It also is important to note that this document builds on two publications released in 1998 by RESNA. The two reports provide extensive details of the many AT programs offered by State AT Projects in 1998, and the impact of these programs on the lives of persons with disabilities. While states continue to operate the essential AT programs described in these previous reports, this 2001 accomplishments document will describe the more recent AT programs developed by State AT Projects. For interested readers, these 1998 publications, *Tech Act Projects Improving Access, Provisions, and Funding for Assistive Technology Devices and Services*, and *Tech Act Projects Creating Systems Change through Policies, Practices, Laws, Regulations, Procedures, and Organizational Structures* can be accessed on the Internet at www.resna.org/taproject/library/accomplish/ acomp99.html and www.resna.org/taproject/library/accomplish/acomp98.html, respectively.

An Overview of Capacity Building

State AT Projects not only provide crucial services to individuals with disabilities, they also play an important role in building the capacity of other state agencies, non-profit groups, and consumer groups to provide AT services or equipment to persons with disabilities. Capacity building by State AT Projects is accomplished through many, varied activities such as grant awards, consumer and advocate educational programs, training sessions, and other actions. By working with other organizations in capacity building activities, State AT Act Projects further their reach and ensure that more individuals with disabilities are able to access AT and IT.

Congress has encouraged and promoted the capacity building work of State AT Projects by providing funding in the AT Act of 1998 specifically for "capacity building and advocacy activities." Through these types of activities, the work of State AT Projects is multiplied and has greater impact.

Important capacity building work by every State AT Project occurs in five goal areas identified in the AT Act of 1998 — employment, community living, telecommunications and information technology, education, and health care. To highlight and examine the impact of capacity building activities in each goal area, capacity building activities will be discussed under each of the five goal areas, not in a separate capacity building section.

Regional Capacity Building

Capacity building also can extend beyond the boundaries of one particular state. The AT Act of 1998 encourages interstate agreements "to expand the capacity of the states involved to assist individuals with disabilities of all ages to learn about, acquire, use, maintain, adapt, and upgrade assistive technology" by providing federal grant money for regional capacity building work. Recently, six State AT Projects have combined forces in a capacity building activity by signing a Memorandum of Understanding to share Web site information. The Rocky Mountain AT Collaborative States — Arizona, Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming — have signed this agreement in an innovative effort to improve information management by providing easy access to AT funding information, and by promoting the efficient use of Web site information.

Future Needs for AT for Individuals with Disabilities

As the number of Americans with disabilities who need AT and access to IT continues to rise, the funding and resources of State AT programs are being stretched to try and meet individuals' requirements for equipment and services. To address current AT needs and to identify future needs in their states, State AT Projects are working collaboratively with individuals, families, and advocacy groups. These joint efforts seek to minimize and eliminate barriers to an individual's full participation in all aspects of society — work, home, school, and community. Additionally, State AT Projects are working with their core constituencies and AT researchers and manufacturers to facilitate and encourage development of new technologies. In the future, as State AT Projects push for more progress in the types of innovative AT options available to persons with disabilities, opportunities will be increased in all areas of life for those with disabilities.

Continuing the Success of AT Projects

The successful work already underway in State AT Projects, and their plans for future development, mirror many AT concepts in the "New Freedom Initiative" proposed by the Bush Administration. Several recommendations in the New Freedom Initiative focus on areas of AT programming that already are a top concern of State AT Projects — including the increasing of community awareness about AT, furthering outreach and training activities, and maintaining low-interest cash loan programs for AT. All these activities currently are being performed by State AT Projects, and, indeed, have been hallmarks of success for State AT Projects in their work with individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, four types of AT initiatives currently established and implemented in States' AT Projects also are recommended in the New Freedom Initiative. States have found that these AT programs are successful in providing increased access to AT and IT for individuals with disabilities. These four types of programs operated by most State AT Projects, and the like-minded proposals that have been put forth in the New Freedom Initiative address:

1. Training and technical assistance to consumers and service providers regarding assistive and universally designed technology to enhance integration into the community (i.e., implementation of the U. S. Supreme Court's Olmstead decision),

2. Training and technical assistance to ensure access to the election and voting process by providing access to polling places and accessible voting technology,

3. Training and technical assistance to assist states in making eGovernment accessible. (As an example, the majority of State AT Projects already have developed and are operating Web accessibility measures for eGovernment for persons with disabilities. These measures currently are required by Section 508 standards of the federal Rehabilitation Act, which mandates that states now have in place Internet and information technology accessibility for state government Web sites and programs), and

4. Training and technical assistance to assist individuals who need AT for employment. This includes providing training to rehabilitation providers and vendors who "take" the "tickets," which are provided under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, as well as to employees and prospective employers.

Other New Freedom Initiative proposals — such as expanding the area of telecommuting, providing technical assistance and information for Americans with Disabilities Act-exempt organizations to expand and ensure access, and identifying and communicating consumer needs and market demands to researchers and manufacturers—all are program areas that State AT Projects have developed the expertise and capacity to provide. For example, a State AT Project has been working with university researchers, manufacturers, and individuals with disabilities to bring new AT devices into the marketplace. This alliance recently has resulted in two new AT devices being manufactured for individuals with disabilities.

As the nation continues to move forward in providing critical AT assistance for individuals with disabilities, the confluence in many principal areas of the current work of State AT Projects and in the proposals in the New Freedom Initiative can create more rapid progress in meeting AT and IT needs.

Accomplishments of State AT Projects

In this section, the accomplishments of states in AT programming since 1998 are presented. These accomplishments are categorized under the five goal areas for AT, as stated in the AT Act of 1998. These five goals are: employment, community living, telecommunications/information technology, education, and health care. Under each of these AT goal areas, program descriptions of several different types of state AT programs will be provided. While each individual narration will describe the AT work being accomplished by a specific State AT Project, these narrations also serve to illustrate the similar AT programs offered by many other State Projects.

EMPLOYMENT

Business Development

Developing an Assistive Technology Tax Incentive. The Iowa Partnership for Assistive Technology (IPAT) helped develop a bill that gives tax credits to Iowa small businesses that provide AT devices or workplace accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The state's Assistive Technology Tax Credit Act provides a hiring incentive for Iowa's small businesses, which have been hard hit by an acute labor shortage, to hire, retain, and accommodate employees with disabilities. This group offers an untapped pool of dependable, productive, and qualified workers.

The tax credit is available to businesses that have 14 or fewer employees, or to small businesses with gross receipts from the preceding tax year of $3 million or less. This AT Tax Credit potentially could reach a large number of Iowa businesses as approximately 70,000 businesses, or 90 percent, have fewer than 20 employees. The AT tax credit covers 50 percent of the first $5,000 paid for devices or modifications with a cap of $2,500. The credit will be available to a business each tax year. The AT Tax Credit Act was passed in Spring 2000.

AT Assistance for Employers

Supplying "Solutions on Site." The Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership, in collaboration with the Elks of Nebraska and the State Vocational Rehabilitation agency, provide work-site technical assistance, fabrication, and installation of assistive technology through a program called Solutions On Site (SOS). This program was started 3 years ago and during the last year it experienced an 85 percent increase in referrals for employment-related services.

The SOS partnership also has sparked a capacity building effort: SOS, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the Nebraska Department of Labor now are jointly funding the purchase of AT solutions for Workforce Investment Resource Centers in Nebraska (20 sites). Each site will have trained personnel to demonstrate and support the use of AT solutions that are integrated into the resource center. As part of the agreement, when additional technical assistance is needed for individual users, the Resource Center will refer to the appropriate partner to obtain this additional assistance.

Providing Employment Support. North Dakota Interagency Project for Assistive Technology (IPAT) and the state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency are working in rural areas on job assistance programs. IPAT funded a multi-agency pilot computer demonstration center within a VR office, assisted staff in product selection to provide barrier-free access to job information and employers via on-line resources, and trained service providers and individuals

with disabilities on adaptive access. To date, this pilot project has been replicated in one region, and has the potential for replication at six other sites. To operate this project, IPAT is working with the Vocational Rehabilitation and Job Service of North Dakota to support the federal Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIIA) in rural, western North Dakota.

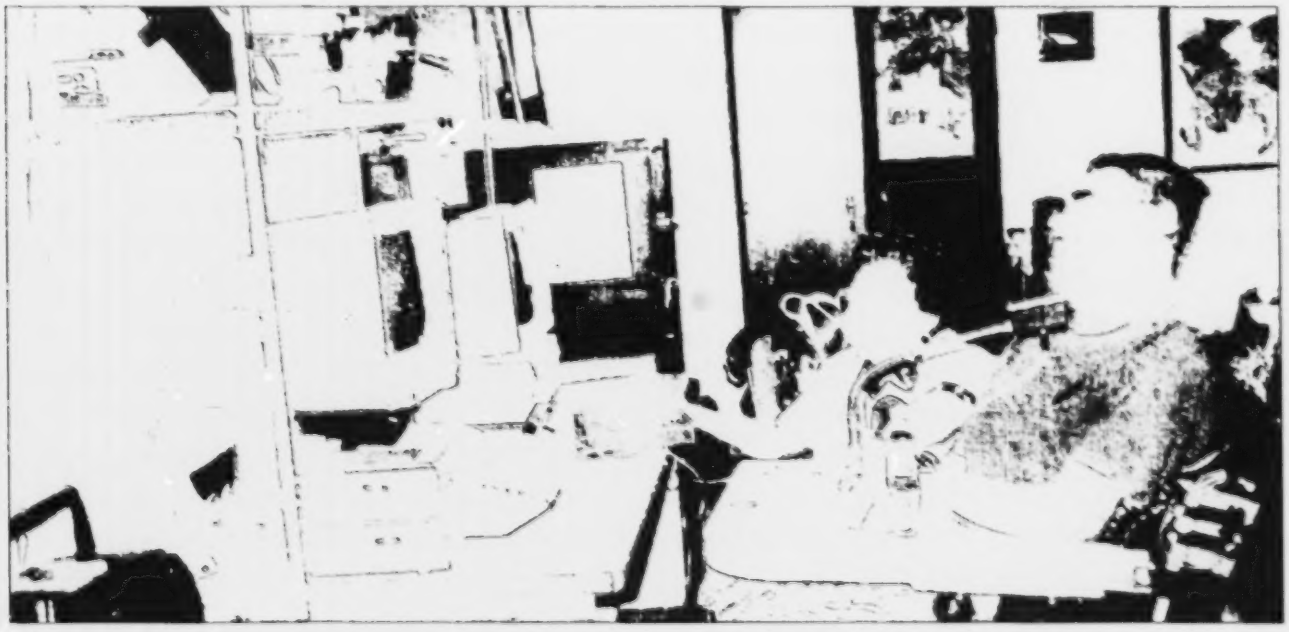
Assisting Businesses in Workplace Accommodations. Assistive Technology of Ohio staff helped develop legislation that passed the Ohio General Assembly to assist businesses in providing workplace modifications for persons with disabilities. The legislation provides state funding to small businesses for reduced-rate loans for workplace accommodations. These loans can be used to make modifications that facilitate the hiring or improve the accommodation for consumers with disabilities. Additionally, the loans may be used to assist Ohio businesses in complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Loan Programs to Purchase AT

Initiating Partnerships Between State AT Projects and Local Banks to Benefit Consumers. Loan programs offered through State AT Projects and local or regional banks offer an important resource for many people seeking to purchase AT at a cost they can afford. Currently, 32 states offer financial loan programs that provide loans at low interest rates to individuals with disabilities. These programs are important as they provide access to AT that can enhance employment, community living, and educational opportunities. AT typically purchased through these programs includes vans or vehicle modifications, wheelchairs, adapted computers, and other equipment that assists an individual with disabilities in obtaining or maintaining employment or in increasing their mobility or adaptability in a home, school, or community environment.

- The Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program (PRATP) found that the lack of financial aid was one of the biggest barriers that people with disabilities faced when trying to acquire an AT device for employment or other purposes. To help solve this problem, PRATP members contacted a local bank to develop a low-interest loan program. The collaborative venture, Program Impulse to the Future, was begun in October 1999 and allows AT consumers to acquire a needed device by obtaining a loan with a low interest rate.

- Michigan's AT Project has established a pilot AT Financial Loan Program in three areas of the state after months of research into other state AT Loan Programs. These programs assist persons with disabilities in acquiring AT that can be used to help obtain employment or to enhance a person's work accommodations, or for devices that improve their quality of



life. A marketing and financial development program for these loans has been established, and implementation of these plans has begun.

- Alabama's AT Project — STAR — in collaboration with Southern Disability Foundation, Inc., and South Trust Bank, created the Ability Loan Program. Consumers and their family members may borrow up to 100 percent of the cost of AT equipment and related services. This new program has assisted individuals in many crucial activities, such as gaining or maintaining employment, through the purchase of AT equipment, including vehicles and vehicle modifications to enable them to commute to work. Used vehicles have been purchased and lifts have been installed in vehicles, thereby increasing an individual's independence and ability to maintain employment or re-enter the work force.

- A second phase of Assistive Technology of Ohio's new employment and AT program will offer reduced-rate loans to individuals with disabilities to help them purchase AT for employment purposes or to improve their quality of life. This proposed phase of the program would provide state funding to "buy down" the interest rate for AT devices, with the state paying a larger percentage of the interest rate on the loan and the consumer paying a smaller percentage.

Medicaid Insurance for Workers with Disabilities

Providing AT through Medical Insurance Buy-In Option. Through recently passed legislation in Indiana, working people with disabilities now can buy Medicaid insurance coverage, which will allow them to purchase the AT they need to get to their work. Possible AT includes a lift-equipped van to provide transportation or a power chair to provide mobility on the job site. Indiana's State AT Project, ATTAIN, Inc., served as the primary spokesperson for the Indiana Medicaid Coalition, which successfully urged state legislators to offer this Medicaid insurance option.

Offering Workers Medical Insurance with Choice of AT Savings Account. Texas passed legislation allowing people with disabilities to buy-in to Medicaid. The Texas Technology Access Project provided active leadership of the coalition that spearheaded this bill. Not only will working Texans be able to access Medicaid AT-related benefits, but they also will be encouraged to save their earnings in special accounts in order to purchase the AT they need related to employment. The concept of "buying-in" received enthusiastic legislative support and this legislation likely will serve as a model for future health care coverage expansions in the state.

Indiana and Texas join other states that have chosen to offer this Medicaid Buy-In coverage under the federal Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIIA). With this TWWIIA provision, states can create Medicaid buy-in options that increase the income and resources that individuals with disabilities can receive and still buy Medicaid on a sliding-scale premium.

AT Assessment, Demonstration, and Training

Assessing Needs for State Agency Clients. In the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Systems of Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (STRAID) operates an AT Center to evaluate clients of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). These evaluations determine what types of AT will be needed by an individual to achieve employment. After the AT assessment, VR clients can proceed to the AT Center to try out the recommended AT devices. Additionally, STRAID provides AT assessments for students with disabilities when requested by teachers or school officials. Parents or family members of children and adults with disabilities, including advocates, also can request assistance. A STRAID staff member participates at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Individualized Work Plan (IWP) meetings and as an AT expert witness at due process hearings.

Accessibility to State Career Development Centers

Ensuring Accessibility. The AT Project in Arkansas, Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN), has worked with its State Career Development Centers — One-Stop Centers funded under the Workforce Investment Act — to ensure that the centers are physically accessible to people with disabilities, so that they can use the centers' employment resources. ICAN evaluated each of the state's One Stop Centers for accessibility and now it is working with the state's Department of Labor to train employment center staff to be more sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities. Efforts also are underway to provide on-call AT specialists who can provide job accommodation assessments at the centers.

AT Initiative for Farmers with Disabilities

Providing Professional Staff with Training on AT for Farmers. WisTech, the AT Project in Wisconsin, contracted with the state's Easter Seals AgrAbility program to provide training to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors, county agricultural extension agents, and insurance company staff in the use of AT for farmers with disabilities. The AgrAbility training targets this group because VR counselors, agricultural agents, and Worker's Compensation Insurance adjusters often will recommend that a person who becomes disabled due to a farming accident, or who acquires a disability through aging, leave farming and begin another occupation.

Since receiving the training, VR staff are reporting an increase in the number of individuals that they are rehabilitating as farmers or agricultural workers. VR and private insurance also are agreeing to fund more AT, based on the success of farmers who are using AT.

COMMUNITY LIVING

Community Action Network Grants

Reaching Rural Areas. Minnesota's AT Project, a System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR), provides funding to volunteer groups who can deliver AT services and devices in rural regions of the state. STAR provides funds through Community Action Network (CAN) grants. The local capacity to deliver AT services has been increased through development of these rural access points for AT. The ultimate goal of the program is for individuals with disabilities to have their AT needs addressed by skilled personnel located within 50 miles of their homes.

In State Fiscal Year 2000-2001, the CANs brought more that 60 AT training classes and clinics to their regions, serving over 1,700 Minnesotans — free of charge. Each CAN that received a grant from STAR has leveraged between $10,000 and $50,000 in additional support for their activities this biennium. Twice a year, STAR also hosts a statewide meeting for CAN coordinators and keeps in touch with them via electronic listserv. A listserv managed by STAR provides a means for ongoing information exchange among the coordinators.

Efforts to Increase Home Accessibility

Offering Grants for Home Modification Services. A home accessibility grant program was started by the Assistive Technology for Kansans project (ATK) and the Centers for Independent Living. This new project, Kansas Accessibility with Modification Program (KAMP), is aimed at Kansans of all ages who need to make their homes accessible. Home modifications are capped at $5,000 for a homeowner and $2,500 for a person renting property. KAMP funded about $350,000 for home modifications for Kansans with functional limitations who meet the income guidelines. In the past nine months, more than 40 Kansans received home modification services through the ATK project.

Services provided through KAMP are extremely important because an estimated 213,000 individuals in Kansas may need some basic modifications to their homes to make them accessible. Because 76 percent of persons with disabilities in Kansas are unemployed or underemployed, or receive a fixed disability income, these individuals are unlikely to afford the necessary modifications without assistance. To operate the new program, the Centers for Independent Living, Area Agencies on Aging, and ATK staff are providing on-site evaluations, arranging for home modifications, and verifying the completion of work. This program also promotes independence under the U.S. Supreme Court's Olmstead decision, which supports the most integrated community-based settings for individuals with disabilities.

Building Accessibility Into New Homes. Vermont became the first state to assist persons with disabilities in gaining easier physical access to many new homes that will be built by developers. The Vermont Assistive Technology Project (VATP) initiated efforts that resulted in the state legislature requiring all new 1, 2, and 3-family housing units built on speculation to include disability access features. These housing units include townhouses and condominiums. This access will help provide for more "visitable" homes, which refers to homes that are not only accessible to guests with disabilities visiting the homes of nondisabled hosts, but to the future needs of the nondisabled residents as well.

Access features now mandated by Vermont include wider doorways, accessible hallways, and bathrooms on the first floor with doorways wide enough for wheelchair users to enter. VATP worked on a task force, which included several state agencies, private groups, and a contractors' association, to effect passage of the law, which requires the new disability access. The law, passed in April 2000, also

directs VATP to work with many groups to create and disseminate educational materials explaining the new construction standards and the advantages of visitable homes.

Providing Low-Interest Loans for Home Modifications. Kentucky's Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC) assists individuals who need home modifications. Beginning in December 2000, the KATLC entered into an agreement with the Kentucky Housing Corporation to provide loans to pay for home modifications such as ramps, accessible interior modifications, or the purchase of environmental controls for eligible individuals. These loans currently are provided at 4 percent interest.

Assistive Technology Sales Tax Exemption

Making AT More Affordable. The Missouri Assistive Technology Project was actively involved in successful efforts to implement a sales tax exemption for assistive technology. The related legislation passed both chambers and was signed by the Governor. As a result, assistive devices that are exempt from sales tax include wheelchairs, scooters, Braillewriters, electronic print enlargers, electronic communication devices, vehicle modifications for accessibility purposes, and other forms of assistive technology.

AT Awards for Assisting Underserved Populations

Promoting Creative AT Technologies. The Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS) provides grants to individuals, and public, private, for profit, and nonprofit entities that reach unserved or underserved Virginians with disabilities through projects that use AT to promote independence, productivity, and quality of life. The "Creative Initiative Awards" are monetary grants given by VATS to those who improve access to AT products, services and information, and stimulate creative AT technologies and strategies at local, state, and regional levels.

Adaptive Equipment

Providing a Way to Try Out Assistive Technology Devices. Montana's AT Project, MonTECH, was awarded a contract from the Montana Developmental Disabilities Program to operate the Montana Adaptive Equipment Program (MAEP). MAEP provides adaptive equipment and therapy services, mainly in the area of seating and positioning, to Montanans with disabilities. MonTECH has contracted with physical and occupational therapists across the state to provide MAEP services.

Additionally, the Montana Assistive Technology Equipment Loan/Lease Clearinghouse (MATEL/LC) program has more than doubled the number of loans made from the previous year. MonTECH averages 54 equipment loans each month. The most common reasons for requesting equipment loans include assessment and evaluation purposes and to try equipment before making a purchase.

Using Business Grants to Provide Accessible Technology. Illinois Assistive Technology Project (IATP) is providing advice and guidance to Ameritech in a program to help provide accessible computers and technology to people with disabilities who have low incomes and those who live in rural areas of Illinois. Ameritech is providing $1 million in grants to the community, some of which will go toward the purchase of AT. These funds will provide accessible work stations equipped with screen readers, voice recognition, and head pointing and other input devices to individuals and community technology centers that serve persons with disabilities. The $1 million was provided through requirements in a merger between Ameritech and SBC. When proposals were requested on how the community could use the $1 million, IATP filed a formal request that successfully obtained a portion of the $1 million for AT.

AT and Disability Awareness

Providing Outreach to Native Americans. Arizona's Assistive Technology Access Program (AZTAP) has partnered with the Arizona Inter Tribal Council to offer assistance in providing AT and disability awareness for each of the 19 participating tribes. AZTAP is providing each tribe with low-tech AT kits to use in their training to reach Native American elders in each tribe. The training provides resource and purchasing information on simple AT devices, such as zipper pulls and adapted household items, that may make activities of daily living easier for older persons.

Minority Outreach

Expanding Outreach in the Latino Community. The New Jersey Technology Assistive Resource Program (TARP) continued the expansion of its Latino outreach. This includes collaboration with community-based organizations

in Latino communities, outreach to churches, and outreach to bilingual educators to raise awareness and access to AT. In June 2000, TARP, in collaboration with community-based organizations, held a Latino Summit Conference that offered information on several programs and issue areas, including access to AT.

Assistive Device Lemon Law

Protecting Consumers. The New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) led a bipartisan, cooperative effort between the New Mexico Governor's Office, Republican and Democrat legislators, and citizens throughout New Mexico to pass the Assistive Device Lemon Law, which created a 1-year warranty and other protections for consumers with disabilities. The Assistive Device Lemon Law helps protect people with disabilities from getting stuck with an assistive device that does not work, one that is a "lemon." Currently, 38 states offer AT Lemon Laws to their constituents with disabilities.

AT Program for Senior Citizens in Rural Areas

Promoting Independence and Productivity Through Use of AT. The Idaho Assistive Technology Project (IATP) helped launch the Assistive Technology Institute for Rural Elders (ATIRE) as a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the independence and productivity of rural seniors through the use of AT and home modifications. ATIRE was started after IATP collected data that showed that Idaho's older citizens, especially those living in rural areas, face significant barriers to the acquisition and use of AT and home modifications.

Assistive Technology Recycling Program

Recycling Equipment Provides Increased Access to AT

- The University Legal Services Assistive Technology Program (ULS/ATP) for the District of Columbia teamed with the DC Center for Independent Living (DCCIL) to administer a community-based equipment recycling and lending program. This program was established to increase the options for acquiring AT by individuals with disabilities. The program will receive donations of used equipment, then refurbish the equipment and lend these devices on a first-come, first-served basis to individuals with disabilities who have no other means of obtaining such AT. ULS/ATP in the District of Columbia also has established an AT low-interest loan financing program with City First Bank. This will allow citizens in the District to borrow money to buy AT. To assist individuals with disabilities in choosing the best AT for their needs, ULS/ATP has established an AT resource center where the public can see, hear, touch, learn, and compare a broad range of devices. This center allows the public to discuss the applications of AT and learn about possible product sources.

- During April 2001 the U.S. Virgin Islands Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (VITRAID) opened an AT recycling unit. The unit will receive donated AT devices, such as computers or parts, wheelchairs, and other AT equipment from government and non-government agencies, corporations, and private citizens and then refurbish or restore the devices. VITRAID then will donate the equipment to persons with disabilities, who are unable to finance or purchase their own devices. VITRAID's goal is to fulfill the dreams of persons with disabilities, who have wanted to acquire AT devices but have not been able to afford them.

Provision of In-Home AT Devices and Services

AT Helps Avoid Nursing Home Placements. South Dakota's AT Project, DakotaLink conducted an innovative study called the Community Technology Options Project (CTOP) — which showed that AT can be cost effective in preventing or delaying an individual's placement in a long-term care facility or nursing home. This project was a collaborative venture of DakotaLink, Department of Social Services, Office of Adult Services and Aging (ASA), and the Prairie Freedom Independent Living Center in Yankton, South Dakota.

DakotaLink found that there are consumers who, for lack of AT devices and services, are forced into premature out-of-home placements in long-term care facilities. The CTOP methodology provided services and devices through an equipment loan program when the AT devices or services were identified as a cost-effective alternative to long-term care. The project documented the cost savings generated by this activity and used the information to seek an ongoing funding source to provide AT for individuals who are otherwise destined for nursing home placement.

Interagency Collaborations

Utilizing AT as a Market-Driven Business Model. The Assistive Technology Library of Alaska (ATLA) and other agencies serving people with disabilities entered into interagency agreements and collaborations with three AT providers to develop an AT Alliance. Reseller agreements now are in place with more than 50 manufacturers, granting ATLA exclusive access and the ability to represent a wide array of AT products. ATLA and Alliance partners continue to adhere to the MSRP (Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Pricing) in order to maximize value to consumers. Other private-sector vendors in Alaska usually mark up their products by 50 to 100 percent beyond the MSRP. As planned, revenue from Alliance member sales of AT goes into the Alliance funding pool.

Developing an AT Buying Cooperative. Georgia Tools for Life, working with the Association of Georgians with Disabilities, has developed an AT buying cooperative to reduce the cost to consumers for AT devices. A cooperative allows goods to be purchased in greater volume at lower, dealer prices, which makes new technology an attainable reality for many persons with disabilities. This volume buying for the cooperative includes many types of items such as scooters, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, and lifts for vans.

Increasing Vendor Involvement. Because of its remote location, few AT vendors serve American Samoa. Islanders have little access to AT because of this dearth of vendors. The American Samoa AT Service Project has encouraged more AT vendors and suppliers to establish offices on the islands, so that its citizens have greater access to AT devices and services.

Working with a Protection and Advocacy Center to Provide Services. Assistive Technology Resource Centers of Hawaii (ATRC) has been working on several advocacy projects for persons with disabilities with Hawaii's protection and advocacy center, the Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC). Through its extensive outreach activities, ATRC is informing consumers and other interested parties that the HDRC will advocate for persons requiring legal assistance in their efforts to acquire AT devices. The HDRC provides free legal services that range from sending letters reminding organizations about consumer's rights, to representing consumers in court hearings. Both agencies refer consumers to each other in an ongoing, collaborative effort to serve the best interests of AT consumers.

Assistive Technology Advocates

Providing Essential Services. In California this year, CFILC was successful in securing $2.25 million for 29 Independent Living Centers in the state to hire AT Advocates to provide information and referral services, outreach, service coordination, and community education at the local level on AT. To date, there now are 36 AT Advocates on board around the state. CFILC has requested $3.5 million for continued funding and to provide legal advocacy services around the state to aid persons with disabilities who need AT but are not receiving equipment or services.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS/ INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility

Assuring Universal Design and Accessibility to State Web Site. The Tennessee Technology Access Project (TTAP) has been working closely with the state of Tennessee Web portal vender to insure that the recently unveiled "Tennessee Anytime" portal incorporates universal design elements that insure equal access for individuals using assistive technology. This has been accomplished by developing and maintaining a relationship with members of the Web portal design team so that universal design is included as part of the process. People with disabilities also are included in the usability testing process that measures the usability of all elements of the Web portal.

Creating Accessibility Standards and Initiatives. In addition to the Maine state government's "computer application program accessibility standard" and accompanying contract language approved in 1998, several initiatives were completed by Maine's AT Project, Maine Consumer Information and Technology Training Exchange (CITE) as part of long-term efforts to assure accessible information technology for the residents of Maine.

These are:

1. Adoption of a charter that creates an Accessibility Committee that reports to the State Government Information Services Policy Board.

2. Approval of a staff position in Maine state government with 50 percent of the task devoted to accessibility coordination.

3. Approval of Web accessibility content standard.

More information is available on the Maine Web site at www. state me.us.

Collaborating with State Agencies. West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) staff collaborated with an interagency group, designated by the governor of West Virginia, to produce standards for the Web sites of state agencies. WVATS staff were successful in making accessibility to state Web sites by individuals with disabilities part of those standards. Most state agencies now incorporate Web accessibility standards in their Web sites. WVATS staff monitor and offer suggestions to new sites or sites not meeting standards.

Developing Far-Reaching Accessibility Standards. Kentucky Assistive Technology Services Network (KATS) was instrumental in the passage of the state's Accessible Information Technology Law (KRS 61.980-988). This law will ensure that the rapidly developing electronic information technology infrastructure in Kentucky will adopt the same accessibility standards for Kentuckians with disabilities as is now being implemented in all federal agencies under Section 508.

The law requires measures to ensure that the future information technology of state and state-assisted entities will meet national standards to allow access to the state's electronic information and data by individuals with disabilities. This includes individuals who are blind or visually impaired and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The law directs the Finance and Administration Cabinet to develop a technology access clause that is in compliance with Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The law permits a person injured by a violation of these access requirements to seek injunctive relief.

Creating Technology Policy and Practices. The New York AT Project, Technology-Related Assistance of Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) has been actively involved in promoting polices and practices on information technology accessibility. TRAID staff co-chairs the state's Information Technology Access Steering Committee (ITASC) that is comprised of a representative from the Office for Technology in the co-chair role, as well as information technology experts from multiple state agencies.

Under the auspices of the Office for Technology, New York's TRAID, with other members of the ITASC, had an integral role in the development and issuance of Technology Policy 99-3, Universal Accessibility for New York State Web Sites. Technology Policy 99-3 requires agency heads and commissioners to designate a staff person to be responsible for implementing the policy, and to regularly monitor the guidelines to ensure that the current version is being used.

Developing Web Accessibility Standards. The Connecticut AT Project, as part of a collaborative effort, worked to develop standards to assure that all state agencies meet stringent standards for Web accessibility. Agencies that meet these new standards are awarded a newly designed ConneCT logo. As an outgrowth, the Connecticut AT Project is working, on request, with others who want to make their sites accessible. One recent success was the transformation of the City of Hartford's attractive (but very inaccessible) site to one that meets the current standard for Web accessibility.

Ensuring Electronic Access. The North Carolina Assistive Technology Project (NCATP) was a member of the Information Resource Management Commission (IRMC) Task Force on Electronic Access in State Government. The task force provided guidance to ensure greater electronic access for people with disabilities. The task force made recommendations on policy to insure accessibility for software and hardware purchases, Web page design, and new state government applications development. The IRMC approved and adopted all task force recommendations. A new state policy to ensure electronic access, which reflected all of the recommendations, was adopted. Additionally, NCATP, as part of the task force, provided guidance for statewide initiatives to promote public access to electronic information technology and training on accessibility.

Collaborating with State Agencies to Access Information Technology. The South Carolina Assistive Technology Project (SCATP) was the lead agency in working with South Carolina legislators to establish the "South Carolina Access to Information Technology Partnership and Coordinating

Committee" in June 2000. The Coordinating Committee was co-chaired by the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind and the Office of Information Resources, and was formed to address how to provide access to electronic and information technology to the state's citizens with disabilities. The partnership developed a statewide Web accessibility training plan and a state policy and Web accessibility implementation plan.

The Coordinating Committee also established five pilot centers to model multiple means of access for people with disabilities. SCATP continues to provide training and technical help to those who are responsible for promoting and helping people use these centers.

Making WAVEs in Web Accessibility. The Pennsylvania Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT) created the WAVE, a Web accessibility checker, which is known internationally as a tool to check Web access for persons with disabilities. The WAVE was developed by a PIAT staff member who is a Web accessibility specialist and rehabilitation engineer.

Training for Webmasters. Minnesota's AT Project, STAR, has worked with the state of Minnesota's Office of Technology to create a statewide policy on electronic and information technology accessibility. It also has been training Webmasters from state agencies on Web site accessibility for more than 2 years. A 3.5 hour curriculum was developed that includes a hands-on lab experience where participants are introduced to Web access validation tools and to computer accommodations such as a screen reader. The Web sites of attendees are used to demonstrate good accessibility as well as areas that need improvement. By the end of May 2001, STAR will have trained approximately 230 state Web personnel and presented the accessibility concepts to an additional 260 IT personnel this biennium. Counties, cities, and private industry have expressed an interest in the classes as well.

Telecommunications Relay Service

Developing IT Guidelines and Specifications. The Massachusetts Assistive Technology Partnership (MATP) wrote the guidelines and specifications for its statewide telecommunications relay service, which were adopted by Bell Atlantic (now Verizon) and that exceed those required by the Federal Communications Commission. MATP also distributes previously used telecommunications equipment provided by Verizon's Equipment Distribution Program.

Braille and Tactile Ballots for Persons Who Are Blind

Providing Independent Access. For the first time in the state of Rhode Island, citizens in the November 2000 election who were legally blind voted with total independence. The Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership had an active roll in the development of the ballots, as well as with promulgating information about their availability to

Educating Webmasters—Providing Insight into Accessible Web Sites

Many Webmasters who were trained by STAR in Minnesota said that the course not only taught them how to make Web sites accessible, but will save them considerable time and effort when putting universal design into their own Web sites. Here are excerpts from the course evaluations that show the value of, and the need for, these training programs:

"I never knew about accessibility problems. Very good information. Opened my eyes and mind to a whole new world."

"Important topic. I was eager to get the information."

"I liked actually seeing and hearing the difference between the good and bad (Web pages)."

"I gained a better awareness of the barriers present to people with varying disabilities. The presentation gave good examples to help understand the issues. Brought out compliance with '508'. I must admit it's the first I heard about it."

"I was considering using 'text only' version, but will seriously reconsider this after taking this class."

"I learned that what I thought 'accessible' meant was not correct. It saved me a ton of backtracking. It was nice to be able to see the site through a screen reader."

Rhode Islanders who can benefit from their use. The Rhode Island General Assembly is the first legislature in the country to pass a law mandating these types of ballots.

EDUCATION

Procurement of AT for Students

Breaking Through Barriers to Purchase AT for Students. The Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD TAP) created a non-profit organization to act as a bargaining and purchasing agent for Maryland educational entities when they are purchasing AT for students. This new cooperative organization has produced more than $600,000 in discounts and savings for its members by conducting large bids, negotiating state-wide buys, and serving as middleman for some devices and software. The new Maryland AT Cooperative has helped break the psychological barrier which implied that AT is too expensive for schools. The result of this new venture is that more students can receive needed AT equipment. The use of AT equipment in school can enhance a student's ability to learn and to interact with teachers and other students.

Serving Children and Youth with Disabilities. Navajo ABLE: An Assistive Device Loan Equipment Program for the Navajo Nation is supported by New Mexico's Technology Assistance Program. The Navajo Assistive Bank of Loanable Equipment (Navajo-ABLE) is a program on the Navajo Nation that provides assistive technology devices, services, technical information, funding information, and training for Navajo children and youth with disabilities. Services are available for Navajo individuals, family members, educators, therapists and others who live on Navajo Nation as well as in the Alamo, Canoncito, and Ramah Reservations.

Transfer of AT for Students

Securing a Mechanism for AT Transfers. Oklahoma's AT Project, ABLE Tech, chaired a 20-member AT task force of state agencies, consumers, and advocates to prepare a final report on AT recommendations. This legislative task force came about as a result of the passage of HB 1024. One important recommendation was to establish an AT transfer mechanism between state agencies and school districts or to parents of children and youth with disabilities. The policy provides for the seamless transfer of AT for students when they move between many agencies, for example, when a student goes from a special education classroom to vocational rehabilitation. This transfer policy is important because students will not lose the use of technology they have mastered when they advance to other environments. ABLE Tech sought the assistance of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth for accomplishing AT transfers as it is charged with oversight for programs for children and youth.

Aiding Transitions for Students. Wyoming's AT Project, WYNOT, and its Protection and Advocacy Agency has worked with the Department of Education to develop a

Navajo-ABLE — Helping a Student Achieve His Goals

The following story illustrates the impact Navajo-ABLE has had on one man's life:

> Nate Yazzie, a 21-year-old Navajo man, has cerebral palsy. In school, Nate learned to use assistive technology devices—a wheelchair, a laptop computer, and software—which enabled him to function in school and to communicate with others. Nate now has graduated from high school and is preparing for college. He will be "transitioning" into a world of independent living, a career, and higher education. Nate wants to find a place where he can support himself, live on his own, and attend the University of New Mexico.
>
> The director of the Navajo-ABLE project was working with Nate and his family throughout Nate's senior year in high school to help him obtain independent living services, and to assist in optimizing seating and positioning in his wheelchair. The director coordinated therapy services for Nate and was looking into the various college options available to him. Nate also received an extensive AT evaluation designed to specify his post-high school needs. The evaluation is important in identifying the environmental controls, personal assistive services, and communication devices needed to prepare him for the start of college. Nate has dreams, and with a little help from his family and Navajo-ABLE, there is little that can stop this vibrant and ambitious young man from fulfilling his goals.

cooperative agreement among the pre-schools and schools to transfer AT equipment with the student as he or she enters grade school. An earlier agreement with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation had eased transition and equipment ownership for those older students transitioning from high school to work.

Using State Conferences to Address School-to-Work-or-College AT Transfers. Mississippi Project START cosponsored statewide conferences to address transition services issues for students with disabilities moving from school to work or college. The conferences increased awareness of the role of AT and the importance of a smooth transition of AT transfers between school and work or college.

Through discussions at the conferences, students, parents, and school personnel were reminded of the importance of AT in postsecondary settings. In addition, information was provided on how to best ensure that students receive the AT that they need.

AT Education for Parents, School Officials, and Advocates

Educating Parents on Their Children's Rights to AT. North Dakota's Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) developed a 3-step approach to address awareness, proper use, and integration of AT in schools around the state. First, IPAT published *Technology for All: A Guide to Solving the Puzzle*, which outlines a planning process for AT purchasing. IPAT developed the materials in response to a request from school administrators and staff for a comprehensive, school-wide plan to purchase AT for students.

Next, IPAT produced an 18-minute videotape, *Know Your Rights to Assistive Technology in Education*, to help parents of students with disabilities get the AT their students need. The video mirrors information in IPAT's statewide AT guide that was developed in conjunction with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

Then, IPAT provided training for attorneys regarding the public school systems' responsibility for AT. The North Dakota Bar Association sanctioned the training by awarding it continuing legal education credits. The presentation and credits were offered over Interactive Video Network as well as self-study via videotape. As a result, about 75 attorneys throughout the state now have information to assist individuals in obtaining AT in their schools.

Training for Professionals — Capacity Building Activities

Developing and Designing AT by Engineering Students. To involve students in cutting-edge AT manufacturing and entrepreneurship activities, the Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Project (PRATP) has collaborated with electrical engineering students at the University of Puerto Rico to

design new AT devices to fit specific consumer needs. The new AT prototypes are presented by the student designers in public forums twice a year. An important goal of this program is to promote the development of commercial devices and the acquisition of patents for the equipment. So far, 2 new AT devices have been introduced into the industry by PRATP and its associates.

Offering Professional Development for Practitioners. For more than two years, the Utah Assistive Technology Program's competency-based training has been provided to 55 service providers in state agencies, private provider agencies, and consumer organizations. Trainees gain specific skills and competencies outlined by the AT Practitioner Credentialing program of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA). The end result of the professional development program is an increase in quality care for consumers.

Providing Training for Students with Disabilities. Oregon Technology Access for Life Needs (TALN) has worked to establish a high tech training program for middle school and high school students to provide employment skills and AT skills for increased employment opportunities and transition from high school. These training programs are funded by the Vocational Rehabilitation Division and are designed to equip 9th through 12th grade students with disabilities with the skills to enter high-tech jobs after high school graduation. TALN provides AT expertise, training, and equipment loans to the schools; the school districts provide modified curricula, community outreach, and placements with industry in local settings.

Offering AT Graduate Coursework for Future Health Care Professionals. Colorado Assistive Technology Project (CATP) staff helped establish graduate level coursework in AT for speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, nurses, and other students in the University of Colorado School of Medicine. These courses are now offered annually to give future health care professionals the AT basics that they can use to provide better services for their clients. In the 1999-2000 school year, 24 students took 18 hours of graduate credit courses in AT and related subjects.

Weaving Assistive Technology Curricula Into University Coursework. The Nevada Assistive Technology Collaborative (NATC) has worked with the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) to ensure that university graduates, particularly those in the helping professions, will leave school with knowledge that will help meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Through weaving assistive technology components into 76 different university courses, the university and NATC have been able to teach the assistive technology/disability curricula to thousands of students. Whether students become doctors, hotel managers, or architects, knowledge of disability issues will be an important part of their careers.

This year alone, 5,120 UNLV students were taught this AT/disability curricula. To extend this project beyond the university, UNLV project staff have produced two videos. One promotes the value of adding AT to a university's curricula and one provides information to teachers on how to use AT in kindergarten through college classrooms.

Increasing the Capacity of the Service Delivery System. The Washington Assistive Technology Alliance (WATA) teamed with two community colleges to develop an Associate of Technology degree in speech and language pathology assistant (SLPA). A curriculum for the SLPA training program now is being written, with funding from a matching grant from the two colleges and WATA. It is expected that one of the primary functions of the SLPA will be to program augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. WATA also has plans underway for a 2-year degree for an assistive technology assistant.

Additionally, WATA is increasing the number of professionals with AT expertise by providing AT training in the preservice curricula. Among many other training activities, WATA has developed and provided training in AT to all occupational therapy (OT) graduate students at the University of Washington. Additionally, WATA developed and staffed a comprehensive AT lab and provided training to other health professionals at the university including residents in medical rehabilitation and students in physical therapy, public health, and prosthetics and orthotics.

AT Assessments for Students

Providing Mobile Assessment Team for Schools. Through Florida's AT Project, the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology, Inc., and the Dade County school system, a mobile assessment team now travels from school to school on a scheduled basis to assist teachers and students

in need of AT. Students benefit from the expert team coming to their schools because assessments in their own environment are less stressful and allow team members to see how students operate in their classrooms. The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology, Inc., works on issues of public awareness, statewide education, and training on AT in the state.

AT Education

Helping Infants and Toddlers. Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) has provided training to increase AT awareness and knowledge to families and service providers in the state's birth-to-three years program. This training focuses on areas of particular interest for this age group and their families, including play, mobility, and communication, as well as policy and funding issues. This early childhood program in AT education is designed to assist babies and toddlers at the earliest stage possible, when the most progress in their development can be made.

HEALTH CARE

AT Services for Medicaid Recipients

Loaning AT Communications Devices. The New Hampshire AT Partnership received $74,000 from the New Hampshire Health Care Fund to purchase augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices for short term loans through the Technology Exploration Center. These devices are loaned for trial and evaluation purposes. When people with disabilities try out AT before they buy it, they are less likely to purchase technology that they will later abandon.

Changing Medicaid Policy to Include Communications Devices. Louisiana's AT Project, Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN), facilitated the development of criteria and a checklist to be used when recommending an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device for Medicaid coverage. The criteria and checklist were adopted as part of Medicaid policy and procedures for use with individuals of all ages who needed AAC devices. LATAN now provides training on criteria, AAC assessments, and Medicaid procedures to speech therapists, case managers, rehabilitation counselors, Medicaid personnel, and others involved in the provision of AAC.

Providing AT and Home Modifications Prevents Institutionalization. Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership has been able to document that AT and home modifications prevent individuals from being institutionalized. Nebraska ATP contracts with the Health and Human Services Home and Community Based Medicaid Waiver program to perform needed home modifications that prevent individuals from being placed in institutions. The cost for the AT and home modifications averages $3,632 per individual. This cost is recaptured in less than 2 months due to decreased need for Medicaid services. Nebraska Health and Human Services Systems estimates an annual $3 million cost savings to Medicaid due to the provision of AT and home modifications.

Medicare AAC Device Coverage Policy Change

Changing a Policy to Benefit Individuals with AT Needs. The Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD TAP) worked with other advocacy agencies to obtain an important change in Medicare policy that will provide Medicare recipients with the ability to purchase needed augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. This change affects Medicare recipients throughout the nation.

In June 1999, Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) staff provided notice that Medicare was going to review its non-coverage policy for AAC devices. MD TAP contracted with an expert in speech and hearing services to represent MD TAP, and the interests of Maryland's users and potential users of AAC devices, on the panel that successfully negotiated with HCFA about new Medicare policies for AAC coverage.

Because of this important change in Medicare policy, HCFA will accept more devices as being covered and available to Medicare beneficiaries. Significantly, manufacturers of dedicated-computer and dedicated-personal digital assistance (PDA)-based devices now have stated they will accept Medicare assignment. The panel also is overseeing implementation of these important changes.

Telemedicine Services

Providing Access to Islanders. The Guam System for Assistive Technology Project (GSAT) partnered with the University of Pittsburgh to use live video off-island

telemedicine to conduct preliminary AT assessments. Particularly in geographic areas that do not have enough local AT evaluators, telemedicine provides an innovative method whereby experts can conduct initial AT assessments from distant locations. The GSAT telemedicine program is providing important, accessible AT services for persons with disabilities in Guam.

Reaching Rural Populations. The Texas Technology Access Project worked with advocates and health care professionals to foster legislation that established a telemedicine pilot program for rural areas in Texas. When fully implemented, this pilot will build on the state's Medicaid telemedicine program by allowing not only physicians, but other health professionals, including AT service providers, to provide their services and expertise to people with disabilities in remote sites throughout the state.

Summary

This document provides an in-depth and extensive examination of the many ways that State AT projects are assisting persons with disabilities in achieving their goals for accessing AT devices and services that will assist them in employment, community living, telecommunications and information technology, education, and health care. During the past 11 years, State AT Projects have been in the forefront of the development of comprehensive AT plans to meet the complex needs of individuals with disabilities. State Projects have accomplished this by working in partnership with individuals and/or their representatives, service providers, and agencies to identify needs, develop plans, and access funding and resources to provide high-tech and low-tech AT devices and services.

State AT Projects have created a broad base of programs and enjoy widespread support among many constituencies for their successful, ongoing work. With continued and increased funding, State AT Projects will not only maintain the many programs they now offer: provision of information and referral services; assessment and evaluation for AT devices and services; advancement of legislation to meet the AT needs of individuals with disabilities; provision of equipment loan programs, equipment demonstration centers, equipment recycling centers, and financial loan programs; capacity building of other agencies; provision of AT workshops, training events, and conferences; publication of AT information through reports, books, and videotapes; and provision of outreach programs, but will continue to look ahead and work with consumers, advocacy groups, innovative AT researchers, and manufacturers to make AT available and to increase the funding for and access to AT devices and services that will advance the lives of children and adults with disabilities.

State Assistive Technology Act Grantees

Administered by the

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

ALABAMA STATEWIDE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS AND RESPONSE PROJECT (STAR) SYSTEM FOR ALABAMIANS WITH DISABILITIES (1993)
2125 East South Boulevard
P.O. Box 20752
Montgomery, AL 36120-0752
Project Director: Ted Bridges
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TTY: (334) 613-3519
Fax: (334) 613-3485
E-mail: tbridges@rehab.state.al.us
Homepage: www.rehab.state.al.us/star

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM ALASKA DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (1990)
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TTY: (907) 269-3570
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E-mail: james_beck@labor.state.ak.us
Homepage: www.labor.state.ak.us/at/index.htm

AMERICAN SAMOA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICE PROJECT (ASATS) (1993)
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
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E-mail: jill.oberstein@nau.edu
Homepage: www.nau.edu/ihd/aztap

ARKANSAS INCREASING CAPABILITIES ACCESS NETWORK (ICAN) (1989)
Arkansas Dept. of Workforce Education
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
2201 Brookwood Drive, Suite 117
Little Rock, AR 72202
Project Director: Sue Gaskin
Phone/TTY: (501) 666-8868
Phone/TTY: (800) 828-2799 (In-State)
Fax: (501) 666-5319
E-mail: sogaskin@ars.state.ar.us
Homepage: www.arkansas-ican.org

CALIFORNIA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM (CATS) (1993)
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2000 Evergreen
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CONNECTICUT ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (1992)
Department of Social Services, BRS
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DELAWARE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE (DATI) (1991)
Center for Applied Science & Engineering
University of Delaware/duPont Hospital for Children
1600 Rockland Road
P.O. Box 269
Wilmington, DE 19899-0269
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Fax: (302) 651-6793
E-mail: dati@asel.udel.edu
Homepage: www.asel.udel.edu/dati/

UNIVERSITY LEGAL SERVICES A.T. PROGRAM FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (1993)
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Washington, DC 20002
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TTY: (202) 547-2657
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E-mail: ajohns@uls-dc.com
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FLORIDA ALLIANCE FOR ASSISTIVE SERVICE AND TECHNOLOGY (FAAST, Inc.) (1992)
1020 E. Lafayette St., Suite 110
Tallahassee, FL 32301-4546
Project Director: Terry Ward, Ph.D., ATP
Phone: (850) 487-3278 (V/TTY)
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Fax/TTY: (850) 487-2805
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Homepage: http://faast.org

GEORGIA TOOLS FOR LIFE (1991)
Department of Labor
Vocational Rehabilitation Program
1700 Century Center, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30345
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Phone: (404) 638-0384
Phone: (800) 497-8665 (In-State)
TTY: (404) 657-3085
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E-mail: toolsforlife@mindspring.com
Homepage: www.gatfl.org

GUAM SYSTEM FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (GSAT) (1994)
University Affiliated Program-
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University of Guam, UOG Station
303 University Drive, Hse #19
Dean Circle
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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY RESOURCE CENTERS OF HAWAII (1991) (ATRC)
414 Kuwili Street, Suite 104
Honolulu, HI 96817
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IDAHO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (1992)
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ILLINOIS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (1989)
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Springfield, IL 62701
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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY THROUGH AWARENESS IN INDIANA (ATTAIN) PROJECT (1990)
2346 Lynhurst Drive
Airport Office Center, Suite 507
Indianapolis, IN 46241
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TTY: (800) 486-8809 (National)
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E-mail: attain@attaininc.org
Homepage: www.attaininc.org

IOWA PROGRAM FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (IPAT) (1990)
Iowa's University Center for Excellence in Disabilities, Center for Disabilities & Development
100 Hawkins Drive, Rm S295
Iowa City, IA 52242-1011
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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR KANSANS PROJECT (1993)
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KENTUCKY ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICE (KATS) NETWORK (1989)
Charles McDowell Rehabilitation Center
8412 Westport Road
Louisville, KY 40242
Project Director: J. Chase Forrester, J.D.
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Phone: (800) 327-5287 (V/TTY, In-State)
Fax: (502) 327-9974
TTY: (502) 327-9855
E-mail: katsnet@iglou.com
Homepage: www.katsnet.org

LOUISIANA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS NETWORK (LATAN) (1991)
P.O. Box 14115
Baton Rouge, LA 70898-4115
Executive Director: Julie Nesbit
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Phone: (800) 270-6185 (V/TTY)
Fax: (225) 925-9560
E-mail: jnesbit@latan.org
Homepage: www.latan.org

MAINE CONSUMER INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY TRAINING EXCHANGE (CITE) (1989)
Maine CITE Coordinating Center
University of Maine System Network
46 University Drive
Augusta, ME 04330
Project Director: Kathy Powers
Phone: (207) 621-3195
TTY: 207) 621-3482
Fax: (207) 621-3193
E-mail: kpowers@maine.edu
Homepage: www.mainecite.org

MARYLAND TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP) (1989)
Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities
2301 Argonne Drive
RM T17
Baltimore, MD 21218
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MASSACHUSETTS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIP (MATP) (1990)
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Boston, MA 02215
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MICHIGAN TECH 2000 (1992)
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E-mail: kdwyeth@match.org
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MINNESOTA STAR PROGRAM (1989)
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Jackson, MS 39215-1000
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E-mail: spower@mdrs.state.ms.us

MISSOURI ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (1991)
4731 South Cochise, Suite 114
Independence, MO 64055-6975
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MONTECH (1991)
Rural Institute on Disabilities
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634 Eddy Avenue
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Homepage: http://rudi.montech.umt.edu/

NEBRASKA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIP (1989)
5143 South 48th Street, Suite C
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E-mail: mschultz@atp.state.ne.us
Homepage: http://www.atp.state.ne.us

NEVADA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATIVE (1990)
Rehabilitation Division
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711 South Stewart Street
Carson City, NV 89710
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Fax: (775) 687-3292
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Homepage: http://www.state.nv.us.80

NEW HAMPSHIRE TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT (1991)
Institute on Disability
The Concord Center
Ten Ferry Street #14
Concord, NH 03301
Project Director: Jan Nisbet, Ph.D.
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Project Coordinator: Sonke Dornblut
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E-mail: sonke.dornblut@unh.edu
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NEW JERSEY TECHNOLOGY ASSISTIVE RESOURCE PROGRAM (TARP) (1992)
New Jersey Protection and Advocacy, Inc.
210 South Broad Street, 3rd Floor
Trenton, NJ 08608
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TTY: (609) 633-7106
Fax: (609) 777-0187
E-mail: mingh@njpanda.org
Homepage: www.njpanda.org

NEW MEXICO TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (1990)
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Santa Fe, NM 87505
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NEW YORK STATE TRAID PROJECT (1990)
NYS Office of Advocate for Persons with Disabilities
One Empire State Plaza, Suite 1001
Albany, NY 12223-1150
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Phone: (800) 522-4369 (V/TDD, In-State)
TDD: (518) 473-4231
Fax: (518) 473-6005
E-mail: traid@emi.com
Homepage: www.advoc4disabled.state.ny.us/TRAID_Project/technlog.htm

NORTH CAROLINA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (1990)
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
1110 Navaho Drive, Suite 101
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NORTH DAKOTA INTERAGENCY PROGRAM FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (IPAT) (1993)
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COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (1994)
Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council, Systems of Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities
P.O. Box 502565 CK
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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY OF OHIO (1992)
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OKLAHOMA ABLE TECH (1992)
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E-mail: mljwell@okstate.edu
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www.okabletech.okstate.edu

OREGON TECHNOLOGY ACCESS FOR LIFE NEEDS PROJECT (TALN) (1990)
Access Technologies Inc.
3070 Lancaster Drive NE
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Homepage: www.taln.org

PENNSYLVANIA'S INITIATIVE ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (PIAT) (1992)
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Philadelphia, PA 19122
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TTY: (800) 750-7428
Fax: (215) 204-9371
E-mail: piat@astro.temple.edu
Homepage: www.temple.edu/inst_disabilities/piat

PUERTO RICO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (1993)
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Assistive Technology Institute
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San Juan, PR 00936-5067
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RHODE ISLAND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS PARTNERSHIP (ATAP) (1993)
Office of Rehabilitation Services
40 Fountain Street
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E-mail: reginac@ors.state.ri.us
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SOUTH CAROLINA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM (1991)
USC School of Medicine
University Center for Excellence
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TENNESSEE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS PROJECT (TTAP) (1990)
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TEXAS TECHNOLOGY ACCESS PROJECT (1992)
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U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS TECHNOLOGY-RELATED ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES (TRAID) (1995)
University of the Virgin Islands
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Homepage: www.vats.org

WASHINGTON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ALLIANCE (1993)
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Center for Technology and Disability Studies
CHDD South Building, Room 104
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Seattle, WA 98195-7920
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WEST VIRGINIA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM (WVATS) (1992)
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